

# DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, June 23, 2000

## From My Perspective

*By Ken Patterson*

I have four topics to discuss with you today—SAFE family connections, new DCFS Board Chair, personnel, and Conflict of Interest Investigations.

### SAFE Family Connections

Recently, someone representing him/herself as a DCFS employee contacted a group of legislators and told them that after DCFS had spent \$17 million on SAFE, the system doesn't work. The concerned legislators immediately dispatched an analyst from the Legislative Fiscal Office and a technology expert to see the system and get the scoop. They visited social workers and supervisors using the system. And what did their analysis show? The system works! Some computers may need upgrading and data transmission lines are not 100% reliable, but SAFE does work. In addition, DCFS workers expressed more concerns about high caseloads than they did about SAFE.

Interestingly enough, I was in Washington, D.C. on the same day (at the expense of the Child Welfare League of America) presenting to a group of 300. My presentation included information on the type of data, outcomes and trends, we are able to capture because of SAFE. Since we can actually produce and analyze service and outcome data, the Child Welfare League believes that we have one of the better child welfare information systems in the nation. I am told that about seven states have not even begun work on a child welfare information system! In addition, because we were one of the few state agencies in Utah that is able to produce outcome data, the Legislative Fiscal Office used DCFS as a model for "out-come-based budgeting."

While I know that SAFE is far from perfect, I also know that it's a much better tool than most states have. Saying that SAFE doesn't work is like saying that adoptions don't work, because a few of them disrupt. The cassette player in my Jeep doesn't work either, but my vehicle still gets me to work everyday.

Even though the visit from the Legislative staff worked out fine and it actually gave the SAFE staff a chance to talk about how additional funding could help, the events that prompted their visit left a bad taste in my mouth. No one part of the DCFS family is so noble that we can trash other family members. I appreciate your continued feedback to the SAFE Help Desk and staff about the things that could be better. SAFE will continue to improve as staff time and budget allow.

### New DCFS Board Chair

Yesterday, the DCFS Board elected Becky Oakley as its new chair. Ms. Oakley is a foster parent and a peer parent coordinator. She will begin her duties as DCFS Board Chair on July 1, 2000. DCFS welcomes Ms. Oakley in her new role!

### Personnel Reminder

Monday, June 26, 2000 is "unfreeze day." Regions are free to fill vacant positions if the Region is below its personnel cap.

## Conflict of Interest Investigations Contract

Craig Barlow from the Children's Justice Division of the Attorney General's Office wrote on Monday, June 19, 2000 that they are declining the offered contract to conduct "conflict" CPS investigations. Therefore, DCFS will be issuing a Request for Proposal to locate a qualified provider to undertake this activity for us. We anticipate holding a "bidder's conference" around July 20, 2000 to discuss what we're looking for with potential agencies or individuals.

## **The Office of Services Review is Coming to You**

*By Craig Monson*

The Office of Services Review (formerly known as the Office of Compliance) is coming to your office this summer or fall. We are going to be working in your regional offices for several weeks, following up on various project results. Under the direction of your Region Director, we want to show you the Bureau of Services Review (BSR) case review results, along with the Quality Assurance (QA) scan results for your team. We would like to train you on the guidelines, with particular emphasis on those questions where your team or region did not score well.

We also plan to train on the Qualitative Case Review (QCR) protocols, by team. Depending on what your region desires, we might go over a case with you and explain how we would score the case if it were part of a QCR, or you may want us to review other facets of the QCR protocol.

We want to help you achieve the Performance Milestone Plan target goals and hope these actions will help. We are very aware of your tight schedules, so we will limit the time we spend with you to the absolute minimum. We will begin in the Western and Salt Lake Regions in July, then spread like a fungus to the remaining regions throughout the rest of the summer and early fall.

## **Policy Manual Update**

*By Steve Bradford*

We've been working on updating and rewriting the DCFS Policy Manual for the past two years. This Manual contains the current policies for our agency. What some of you may not be aware of is that many of the new policies adopted by the DCFS Board require rulemaking and a public comment period before they can be published in the DCFS Manual.

This is where we are with some of the policy rewrites. Adoption policy received a complete face-lift and now is being further revised to incorporate the new legislation establishing a priority for married couples.

Child Protective Services policy has been completely updated and should be published in the near future.

Considerable work has been accomplished on the Out-of-Home policy. This program is so vast that it is going to take more time to do a complete revision, but specific

improvements will be incorporated in the next update to the DCFS Manual in July 2000.

Please use the version of the DCFS Manual found on the Department of Human Services home page at <http://www.dhs.state.ut.us> under the section of Policies and Reports, Division of Child and Family Services, Child Welfare Manual. **Please do not use any other version!** If you are having problems using FOLIO to view or print the DCFS Manual, please let me know by return e-mail. A Microsoft Word version of the Manual is available on request.

## Policy and Statute Clarification

*By Abel Ortiz*

I want to take a moment to clarify when you are required to complete an unscheduled home visit. House Bill 223 allows DCFS not to complete an unscheduled home visit when the following conditions exist:

1. The child has been removed from the home,
2. DCFS has reasonable cause to believe the perpetrator does not live in the child's home and the perpetrator does not have access to the child, and, if appropriate and indicated,
3. In any case alleging physical injury, sexual abuse, or failure to meet the child's needs, a medical examination will be completed. This examination shall be obtained no later than 24 hours after the child is placed in protective custody.

If a case falls outside of these requirements, you must conduct an unscheduled home visit. If you have any questions about this, please e-mail me.

## Defining the Practice Model

*By Richard Anderson*

I accepted the challenge from one of our Practice Model training groups to define the Practice Model in two sentences. What a challenging offer! Here is my first attempt.

*DCFS' Practice Model is our philosophy (as stated in the mission and practice principles) and defines our discipline for consistently producing the quality core conditions that provide safety, permanence, and well-being for children and their families. The Model requires rigorous and continual strengthening of our staff through demonstration, practice, and feedback to produce highly effective skills in the most essential human interactions that we use in building on the strengths of families, children, and the community to accomplish the mission of our Division.*

You surely have some great ideas of how to do this! Please e-mail me with your ideas on how you would describe the Model in two sentences.

New week I will attempt the Practice Model top ten list!

# National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System

*By Navina Forsythe*

In an earlier weekly update, we introduced you to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) federal reporting requirement. This week we want to inform you about National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

NCANDS is Child Protective Services (CPS) information that is submitted to the federal government (Administration on Children and Families) annually. There are two parts to NCANDS. This first is the Summary Data Component (SDC), which is a 19-page paper survey asking for aggregated CPS information. Elements reported in SDC are number of investigations, referral sources, results of investigations, allegations, whether ongoing services were received by the victims, age, race, sex, fatalities, previous services, perpetrator relationship, and average referral response time.

The second component is the Detailed Case Data Component (DCDC). This victim-level data file consists of 117 elements and is submitted electronically. Information is similar to the SDC and includes child and parent characteristics, case contributing factors, and more detailed perpetrator information.

NCANDS was voluntary prior to the development of State Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS—SAFE is Utah's SACWIS system). In 1997, approximately 40 states reported some information on the SDC and 15 states submitted DCDC data. However, federal funding supplied for the development of SACWIS systems was conditional on including the ability to submit NCANDS information. Since most states have accepted this funding for SACWIS system development, more states should be able to submit NCANDS data.

Utah has a strong tradition with NCANDS. We have been submitting SDC and DCDC data for several years. In addition, Utah is the only state to complete every element on the SDC for two years in a row!

While we are able to report data for every element, there is a concern about data accuracy. As with AFCARS, when we work on NCANDS reporting, if there are questions about data, we may check with caseworkers about specifics on cases in an attempt to provide the most accurate information possible.

If you have any questions about NCANDS, please e-mail me!